



TROPIDORHYNCHUS CORNICULATUS: Vig & Horsf.

TROPIDORHYNCHUS CORNICULATUS, *Vig. and Horsf.*

Friar Bird.

Merops corniculatus, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. i. p. 276.

Corbi calao, Le Vaill. Ois. d'Am. et des Indes, tom. i. p. 69. pl. 24.

Knob-fronted Honey-eater, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. iv. p. 161.

Knob-fronted Bee-eater, Ib. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 151.—Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. viii. p. 183.

Tropidorhynchus corniculatus, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 324.—Jard. and Selb. Ill. Orn., vol. iii. pl. 133.—Gould, Syn. Birds of Australia, Part I.

Merops monachus, Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp., p. xxxiv, young.

Cowled Bee-eater, Ib. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 155.—Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. viii. p. 166, young.

Cowled Honey-eater, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. iv. p. 162, young.

Knob-fronted Bee-eater, White's Voy., pl. in p. 190, young.

Tropidorhynchus monachus, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 324, young.

Coldong, Aborigines of New South Wales.

Friar, *Poor Soldier*, &c., of the Colonists.

THERE are few birds more familiarly known in the colony of New South Wales than this remarkable species of Honey-eater: it is generally dispersed over the face of the country, both in the thick brushes near the coast and in the more open forests of the interior. I also observed it tolerably abundant on the banks of the Peel, but could not fail to observe that its numbers diminished as I descended the Namoi, on the lower parts of which river it is, I believe, rarely if ever seen, its place there being supplied by the yellow-throated species, *Tropidorhynchus citreogularis*. My own observations induce me to consider it as a summer visitant only to New South Wales; but as a lengthened residence in the country would be necessary to determine this point, my limited stay may have led me into error. It has never yet been known to visit Van Diemen's Land, neither have I traced it so far to the westward as South Australia.

The Friar Bird, selecting the topmost dead branch of the most lofty trees whereon to perch and pour forth its garrulous and singular notes, attracts attention more by its loud and extraordinary call than by its appearance. From the fancied resemblance of its notes to those words, it has obtained from the Colonists the various names of "Poor Soldier," "Pimlico," "Four o'clock," etc. Its bare head and neck have also suggested the names of "Friar Bird," "Monk," "Leather Head," etc.

Its flight is undulating and powerful, and it may frequently be seen passing over the tops of the trees from one part of the forest to another. While among the branches it displays a more than ordinary number of singular positions; its curved and powerful claws enabling it to cling in every variety of attitude, frequently hanging by one foot with its head downwards, etc. If seized when only wounded, it inflicts with its sharp claws severe and deep wounds on the hands of its captor.

Its food consists of the pollen of the *Eucalypti*, and insects, to which are added wild figs and berries.

It commences breeding in November, when it becomes animated and fierce, losing all fear of man, and readily attacking hawks, crows, magpies (*Gymnorhina*) or other large birds that may venture within the precincts of its nest, never desisting from the attack until they are driven to a considerable distance. The nest, which is rather rudely constructed, and of a large size for a Honey-eater, is cup-shaped, and outwardly composed of the inner rind of the stringy bark and wool, to which succeeds a layer of fine twigs lined with grasses and fibrous roots, the whole being suspended to the horizontal branch of an apple- (*Angophora*) or gum-tree without the least regard to secresy, frequently within a few feet of the ground. So numerous were they breeding in the Apple-tree Flats near Aberdeen and Yarrundi, that they might almost be termed gregarious. The eggs are generally three in number, of a pale salmon colour with minute spots of a darker tint, one inch and five lines long by eleven lines broad.

There is no observable difference in the plumage of the sexes, but the female is somewhat smaller in size.

The adults have the bill and head dull ink-black; all the upper surface, wings and tail greyish brown, the feathers of the latter tipped with white; chin and lanceolate feathers on the chest silvery white, with a fine line of brown down the centre; remainder of the under surface brownish grey; eye red, fading immediately after death to brown and sometimes to greyish hazel; feet lead-colour.

The young, although having the same general colouring as the adult, have the head less denuded of feathers, and a mere rudiment of the knob on the bill; the feathers on the breast are also less lanceolate in form, and those on the sides of the chest are margined with yellow; eye dark brown, surrounded with short brown feathers lengthening into a tuft at the back of the head; feet much more blue than in adults.

The Plate represents an old bird and a young one of the first autumn, on the wild fig of the Upper Hunter; the birds and plant being of the natural size.